

Americans struggling to make it through the weakest economy in a generation. Since President Bush took office, 2.3 million private sector jobs have been lost, the worst jobs record for any President since the end of World War II. The unemployment rate is stuck at a 6-year high. We will see millions of Americans whose retirement plans have been crushed by the fall of the stock market. The Dow dropped below 8,000 again yesterday; and overall, the market has lost trillions of dollars in value since President Bush took office. We will see firefighters and police officers who still sit exposed on the front lines of homeland defense, desperate for help from this Congress. It has been nearly a year and a half since September 11, but Republicans have done shockingly little to increase America's defenses here at home.

Mr. Speaker, Democrats have fought for these priorities. We have proposed economic stimulus plans to create at least 1 million new jobs this year, put money and purchasing power in the hands of consumers, and provide relief to struggling small businesses; and we have tried time and again to make Americans safer at home by meeting critical homeland security needs.

Unfortunately for the American people, Mr. Speaker, Republicans have the power in Washington, and just take a look at the government they control. We will see an out-of-touch Republican Congress that arrogantly refuses to do the job they have been elected to do: address critical needs like homeland security and education. Republicans will not help firefighters or increase port security, but they have relaxed their own ethics rules in the House of Representatives. Mr. Speaker, we will see a Republican Party that has but one answer for every problem: budget-busting tax breaks for millionaires that will do nothing to stimulate the economy this year. Soldiers and firefighters are putting their lives on the line to keep Americans safe at home, and President Bush is pushing \$90,000 tax breaks for everyone making \$1 million or more a year. Middle-class Americans are struggling through the worst economy in a generation, but the Bush plan would provide half of all taxpayers with less than \$100.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it appears that Republicans just do not understand the real state of the Union for the vast majority of America, because if they did, they would not insist on sacrificing the security interests of all Americans to pay for tax breaks for the most privileged few. That is just wrong. It is time that Republicans stopped stifling homeland security to pay for tax breaks for millionaires, and it is time they stopped using their political power to divide this great Nation.

Mr. Speaker, last week I attended a mobilization ceremony for a reservist in Grand Prairie Texas who had been called to active duty. These brave men

and women are making a great sacrifice for their country, leaving their families and jobs to support our troops overseas. I was struck by their courage and by their willingness to put aside their own personal concerns to serve their country. That spirit of unity and sacrifice has made America great for the past 2 centuries. I hope it is the spirit President Bush remembers tonight during his State of the Union and that the Republican Congress puts into practice so that we can finally address our economic and homeland security challenges.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY).

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, after 9-11, it became obvious to all of us, I think on both sides of the aisle, that we needed to equip the people at the local level who will respond to terrorist attacks with the best equipment that we could possibly find to make certain their equipment was compatible and safe enough to do the job. For reasons that I find difficult to fathom, the White House has resisted efforts to do that on four separate occasions.

The first example is what happened on the supplemental a year ago. After 9-11, the committee, on both sides of the aisle, agreed that we ought to add more money for first responders, and we tried to do that. The White House strenuously resisted. In fact, at one point the President personally told us that he would veto one dime more than the White House had appropriated for homeland security items. Despite that fact, on a bipartisan basis, the House and the Senate approved \$400 million in funding for first responders in that supplemental.

Then, last year, in their second supplemental which the administration sent up, they still provided no request for first responders. Again, the House and the Senate, acting on a bipartisan basis in both Houses provided, after much White House resistance, \$551 million for first responders for firemen, for policemen, and the other folks at the local level who are our first line of defense against terrorist attacks in our communities. The President vetoed \$350 million of that \$500 million.

Finally, the administration did request \$3.5 billion for first responders in the regular 2003 appropriations bill, but it then proceeded to back the political strategy in the House that prevented the veterans under the VA-HUD bill from coming to the floor; and it prevented the State, Justice, Commerce appropriations bill from coming to the floor. As a result, neither of those bills which were supposed to contain funding for first responders, neither of those bills passed. And then, when the continuing resolution finally passed, which was supposed to contain \$650 million for first responders, the White House saw to it that the agency would not apportion that money among the States and localities.

So after we have that track record, the White House resistance to bipartisan congressional support for adding money for first responders, the White House chief of staff went on national television last Sunday, Mr. Card did, and told Mr. Russert, the moderator, and the entire country that the only reason first responders were not getting their money is because the Congress had not done its job.

Baloney. In capital letters, BALONEY.

The fact is that both political parties, on a bipartisan basis in both the House and the Senate, on four separate occasions tried to meet our responsibilities in providing the funding that was needed for first responders and, the White House, in each of those instances, either flatly rejected the money or saw to it that they would use their power in order to squeeze down the amount of money that we wanted to provide for those initiatives.

So now, what I am going to urge Members to do when we get to the resolution today is to vote for a motion which we will offer which restores that needed money for first responders.

It is time for two things to happen: it is time for the White House to stop peddling fiction about why the first responders at the local level do not have badly needed money to deal with terrorism problems at the local level; and, secondly, it is time for us to actually get the money out to them so that we do not have to sit, the next time we have a terrorist attack saying, gee whiz, I wish we had done something.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1230

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on House Joint Resolution 13, and that I may include tabular and extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS, FISCAL YEAR 2003

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the rule just adopted, I call up the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 13) making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2003, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration.